



CAPITOL NEWS

FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE 21ST MICHIGAN SENATE DISTRICT

MAY 2006

REPEAT DRUNK DRIVERS FACE HARSHER PUNISHMENT.

Convicted drunk drivers who repeatedly get behind the wheel while intoxicated could receive harsher punishment for their violations under newly proposed legislation. Currently, a person may be charged with a felony for a third drunk-driving conviction if it occurs within ten years of the first conviction. If a third conviction occurs more than ten years after the first, it is merely a misdemeanor punishable by up to 93 days in jail. Senate Bill 1241 would amend the law, making any third or subsequent drunk-driving conviction a felony, regardless of the time passed between convictions.

SAVE THE CHILDREN. SAVE the Children, a landmark legislative package to help prevent early learning failure and provide students with tools and skills for educational life success, has become law. A component of the plan establishes an Early Intervening Grant Program, administered by the Department of Education. The program will allow schools with successful intervention models to act as instructional mentors for other school districts interested in setting up their own program. It will develop four model sites and up to 15 sites of improvement. Targeted at school districts with special education populations exceeding the state average, school districts with a percentage of pupils reading below grade level also are eligible.



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SUPER ID'S. The U.S. Congress passed legislation last year mandating that by 2008 state driver licenses will no longer be used for any federal purpose, such as crossing the border or boarding an airplane, unless the license meets federal requirements. Features required by the federal government include a digital image of an individual's face, proof of legal status, mandatory information and card security features. More than 300,000 people travel across the Canadian-United States border daily. Each day, more than \$1 billion in goods crosses the border.

NEW GRADUATION STANDARDS. Legislation creating rigorous high school graduation requirements to ensure Michigan schoolchildren will be prepared for the 21st Century economy is now law. The challenging statewide standards make Michigan a national leader in demanding students complete high school only after taking a certain amount of credits in various subjects as well as specific courses, such as algebra. The legislation would require students to take four years, or equivalent credit, of English and math; three of science and social studies; and one year of an arts course as well as a health and physical education course. Additionally, students would have to take biology, geometry and Algebra I and II, among other specific course requirements.

FREE FISHING WEEKEND. Introduce a friend to fishing during Michigan's Free Fishing Weekend held June 10-11, 2006. Residents and out-of-state visitors can fish without a license for this weekend only. All fishing regulations still apply. Visit www.michigan.gov/dnr for more information about special programs. You can also search the fish stocking database, check the "Weekly Fishing Report," and access bathymetry maps of many Michigan inland lakes at the site.

VETERAN PENSION BENEFIT. Many veterans or their widows are unaware of pension benefits available to them. The pension is paid to wartime veterans with limited income or the eligible dependents of deceased wartime veterans. While the amount is modest, it can be a big help to those who qualify. For more information, including income eligibility, call the Department of Veterans Affairs toll-free at 1-800-827-1000 or visit their website at www.vba.va.gov.

IMAGINATION LIBRARY. Senate Bills 1174 and 1175 have been introduced to implement a program to help promote early childhood literacy. Under this program, enrolled children would receive a book a month from infancy to their fifth birthday. Funding will also be set up to implement this program and provide matching grants to school districts to run this program. Several school districts already have successful programs in place and other states have begun this program as well. The Imagination Library was originally started by Dolly Parton through her Dollywood Foundation.